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THE GOSPELS AND CONTEMPORARY BIOGRAPHIES— *Concluded*

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The New Testament Gospels, viewed as literature and as records of historical facts about Jesus, find their closest ancient parallel in those writings of Plato and Xenophon which describe the personality, the teaching, and the career of Socrates. Dating the *Dialogues* of Plato and the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon at about 380–350 B.C., and the Gospels at about 70–100 A.D., a time interval of four hundred and fifty years separates the two groups of writings. For the present purpose, however, this interval is without significance, waiving the superficial and attending to the essential aspects of the comparison.

The work that Socrates did for Greek thought and life in the fifth century B.C. was strikingly parallel to the work that Jesus did for Jewish thought and life in the first century A.D. Each was representative of the highest conscientiousness, intelligence, aspiration, and purpose of his nation, each regarded himself as appointed by God to a special mission for the uplift of his people and as continually guided by God to its performance. There was not a little difference of form and manner between the two ministries, but they had a common function—to inaugurate a new standard of conduct, to replace the current morality with a superior type of moral thought and practice. Both Socrates and Jesus were lofty, strenuous, ethical idealists, bent upon converting and driving their nations to a higher ethics. Both pointed out the defects of the commonly accepted standard and the unideal conduct of the national teachers and leaders. Both held aloof from the institutions and classes of the social order, working in an unattached and single-handed way, reaching the public through a direct personal relationship and appeal. Their ministry was without charge. Each attached

to himself a number of close followers,¹ who absorbed his message and exhibited its proper influence. In due time—Socrates' ministry was long, for he lived to be about seventy years of age (†399 B.C.); Jesus' ministry was short, for his death came at about the age of thirty-five (†30 A.D.)—they found themselves in open conflict with the public authorities and met violent death at their hands. Each came to be viewed as the founder of a movement, which their disciples carried forward, organized, and expanded. Successive generations revered them, made use of their messages, and perpetuated their memory.

Plato and Xenophon, whose writings are the chief sources of available information about Socrates,² were immediate disciples of Socrates, attending upon his instruction for some years toward the close of his life. Plato was about twenty-eight years old and Xenophon about thirty-one, when Socrates was put to death in Athens at the age of seventy. Xenophon was away from the city on a military expedition (the *Anabasis* into Persia) at the time of the trial of Socrates in 399 B.C., but Plato was present at the proceedings against him. Plato was in full sympathy with Socrates on the tragic occasion, and shared at least in part his critical attitude toward the political leaders; so that on the condemnation of Socrates, it seemed best to Plato to turn aside from politics for which he had been preparing,³ and even to withdraw for a time from Athens itself.

Two motives seem to have prompted the production by Plato and Xenophon of the writings about Socrates: (1) to restore the reputation and rehabilitate the message and influence of Socrates, which had been seriously injured by his public condemnation and

¹ See Burnet, *Greek Philosophy*, Part I, "Thales to Plato" (1914), pp. 151-53.

² Minor sources of information are the writings of Aristophanes, Aristotle, and Diogenes Laertius.

³ Burnet rightly remarks, "Fortunately he found something better to do" (p. 189). Plato took up philosophical teaching and writing. Otherwise we should have been without the *Dialogues*, and probably the knowledge and influence of Socrates would have been very much less than they were after 399 B.C. What Plato's political intelligence, idealism, and purpose were can be readily seen from his extensive dialogue, the *Republic*, pronounced by common consent the greatest of his works, and one of the greatest works of all time.

execution; (2) to give his teaching currency, development, and creative power in the fourth century, and so to carry forward the movement of ethical reconstruction which Socrates had begun in the fifth century B.C. Both motives operated conjointly, possibly with some difference of proportion and perspective, in the *Dialogues* of Plato and the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon.

For many years Socrates had been a renowned teacher at Athens. He had been independent, eccentric, critical, and disputatious, yet also picturesque, idealistic, well meaning, friendly, and useful. The comedians (especially Aristophanes in the *Clouds*) had burlesqued him, but no harm was intended; very likely this humorous treatment of him on the public stage increased the general interest in him. Socrates had served with some distinction in the military campaigns of the Peloponnesian War, 432-422 B.C. Still later he had a brief experience in public office, showing marked probity and determination. He had been sharply criticized and at times feared by the political leaders, yet until the end of his long life he had never been summoned to public trial. The wonder, however, may be that he escaped trouble for so many years, because his plain personal criticism of powerful statesmen and officials made him many enemies. Socrates inveighed against democratic control at Athens on the ground that it was untrained and incompetent leadership, undesirable, and dangerous to the common welfare. This latent, cumulative hostility to him became active in the last years of his life, with the shifting of Athenian politics, and was the real cause of his arrest, trial, conviction, and execution.¹ This event necessarily was destructive of his good name and influence. Public opinion, which had been mainly favorable to him, was disaffected. He had criticized, rebuked, and ridiculed the Sophists, the established and highly influential teachers of the day, who trained most of the statesmen and were loaded with honors and emoluments. The Sophists were now able to turn public opinion against Socrates and must have taken a malicious pleasure in the dethronement of the foremost ethical teacher and philosophical disputant of Greece.

¹ See especially Burnet, *op. cit.*, pp. 180-92; Grote, *History of Greece*, chap. lxviii.

Socrates had never been disposed to conciliate his foes—his individualism was extreme. Even in the trial itself, when death was the issue, he would not placate or defer to the judges in either his words or his attitude. He assumed himself superior to them, he took the opportunity to lecture them, he seemed at one moment to be indifferent and at another to challenge their decision. He was too great and proud a spirit to descend to the level of the popular Athenian tribunal, even when a conciliatory manner and word might have secured a vote in favor of his acquittal. The matter certainly went the worst way possible, and the ignominy that befell Socrates depleted his fame at once and for some years. But within a short generation the cloud of obscurity was passing over, and public appreciation of him was returning. His personality and message were quite too fine and valuable for permanent eclipse. Apologetic writings began to appear in his defense, showing his piety, his nobleness, his lofty ethical message, his surpassing ability as a teacher of youth, and his skill as a dialectical philosopher. The sentiment of the court was shown to have been nearly as strong for acquittal as for condemnation, and the animus political rather than moral or religious. These writings restored Socrates to prominence and influence in the public mind.

The foremost defenders and expounders of Socrates were Plato and Xenophon. Their Socratic writings produced a profound reaction, with a rehabilitation of his reputation and a new study of his message. A Socratic movement was organized by Plato and Aristotle that put the moral idealism and the dialectical method of the great teacher into a permanent place in Greek thought and life, whereby his influence dominated ancient philosophy and ethics till the Mediterranean civilization was submerged in the sixth century A.D.—a period of nearly a thousand years.

The parallel is obvious and close between the rise of the Socratic writings and the rise of the Gospels. They were similar in the motives that inspired them: to restore and upbuild the reputation and influence of one who had been put to death by the state as a dangerous person, but whose contribution to human welfare was quite too valuable to be lost. And they were similar in their contents: the preservation, in memorabilia form, of his more

significant sayings, deeds, and personal traits, since he had himself put neither his message nor his personality on record.

It is notable also that the historical criticism of the sources for ascertaining the life and teaching of Socrates proceeds in a like manner, and with a like diversity of results, as is the case with the historical criticism of the sources for ascertaining the life and teaching of Jesus. Opinion of the sources divides into three main positions: an extreme adverse view, an extreme literal view, and a discriminating intermediate view. Some critical scholars hold that the real Socrates cannot be recovered, being wholly submerged beneath the dramatized, idealized, and pragmatized Socrates of Plato and Xenophon. In the criticism of the Gospels this view corresponds with the view of those critical scholars who hold that the New Testament writings present no trustworthy account of the historical Jesus, but rather an apologetic and homiletical body of propagandist material that grew up in the early stage of the Christian movement, containing a poetic and theological creation of an ideal person and savior. On the other hand, some scholars understand that the accounts of Socrates in Plato and Xenophon report fully and accurately the real man; they use these sources of our knowledge of Socrates without criticism, in a literal way taking everything that is told about him and weaving it together without historical discrimination as the story of his life and work. In the interpretation of the Gospels the corresponding view is that they tell the whole story of Jesus quite as it was, so that one may use at their face value all the data given in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, constructing from them by a mere process of compilation (a "Harmony of the Gospels") the true historical account of Jesus' career, message, and personality.¹

Against both of these extreme views, the adverse and the literal, one may confidently maintain a discriminating historical

¹ As respects the Gospels, there later arose a theological doctrine of special divine inspiration to explain their origin and thereby guarantee their truth. Church officialism, in its effort to establish for itself an absolute authority, predicated an infallible code of belief and practice. Because the Greek religion was not ecclesiastically organized and dogmatized, no similar doctrine seems to have been developed concerning the Socratic writings; although most highly valued and widely used, they were viewed as human documents, and Socrates was thought of only as a human being.

interpretation of the data of Socrates' life supplied by Plato and Xenophon. Their writings report with a good measure of fulness and accuracy the main facts of his deeds, his personality, and his teaching. The Socrates they present is essentially and distinctly the real Socrates of the fifth century B.C. in Athens; through them we actually know the founder of ethical philosophy, and the foremost intellectual figure of Greece preceding Plato himself. To be sure, there is much dramatization, idealization, and pragmatization, with much supplementation of his teaching in Plato's later *Dialogues* and in Xenophon's *Economist*. But the processes of historical and literary criticism enable us to distinguish in the main between the primary and the secondary elements of the accounts; not that all scholars are agreed as to which data are primary and which secondary, but that we are progressing toward the solution of the problem. A like statement can be made concerning the historical trustworthiness of the Gospel accounts of Jesus. A discriminating method with them does put us into possession of the real Jesus of the first century A.D. in Palestine; we can ascertain from their data the essential character, work, and message of the supreme ethical idealist, the founder of Christianity, and the foremost religious figure of Judaism. To be sure also the Gospels dramatize, idealize, and pragmatize Jesus, and the Fourth Gospel elaborately transmutates and supplements his message. But, as with the Socratic writings, so with the Gospels, we can distinguish by means of historical and literary criticism between the primary and the secondary elements of the accounts. We are not to be discouraged in the pursuit of the real Jesus by the fact that scholarly opinions respecting him are at present so diverse and so contested. The preliminary obstacle to a solution of the historical problem of the Gospels is theological: the traditional doctrine of an inspired inerrant Scripture, and the traditional doctrine of a supernatural soteriological Christ. Beyond this lies the specific historical process of interpretation, as in the case of the Socratic writings. This interpretation of the Gospels has been entered upon, and we are getting ahead with it—not rapidly perhaps, but hopefully.

It is about equally true of the Socratic writings and the Gospels that they present, not photographs, but portraits of their heroes.

The difference between the photograph and the portrait is considerable. Speaking in relative terms, the photograph pictures its subject externally, literally, and exactly; it gives not only the best points, but all the points; it shows the man as biology made him, rather than as appreciative persons visualize him or homiletical persons describe him. In comparison, the portrait pictures its subject at his finest state, with a glory surrounding him and (it may be) a halo on his head. It presents him for the public eye, in an ideal attitude, with his best traits prominent, and conveying his life message in the expression of his face. Only the famous (and the rich!) attain to portraiture, and the portrait tells those things which the public will wish to know or to think of its hero. The photograph is chiefly chronicling, the portrait is chiefly pedagogical.

Obviously Socrates and Jesus are presented as public heroes, as exemplary persons to be appreciated and imitated. The primary motive of putting them before the public in writings is to instruct and to inspire men in their type of living. The interpretation of them given by the authors will be such as the practical end requires. Acts, utterances, and characteristics that have inspirational and pedagogical value will be selected and presented in an effective way. The hero will be read into the later environment of which the writer is a part, and will be arrayed to function for this environment, however it may differ from the conditions in which his own life was set. We are not therefore to expect too much in the line of exact historical fact from our biographical accounts of Socrates and Jesus. The chief concern of their biographers was to accomplish practical results in the moral-religious sphere.

The time interval between the height of Socrates' ministry and the composition of the Socratic writings by Plato and Xenophon was approximately fifty years, or two generations. The climax of his work may be dated about 420 B.C., when he was at the age of fifty years (†399 B.C.). Our biographies of him were written somewhere within the period 380-350 B.C.; that is, forty to seventy years later. The interval of time between Jesus' ministry and the composition of the Gospels was also about fifty years, or two generations. His public work belonged to the years 28-30 A.D., and our

biographies of him were written at different points within the period 65-110 A.D. As regards the environment of the life in comparison with the environment of the biographical writings, the cases of Socrates and Jesus do not correspond. Plato wrote at Athens where Socrates had lived and worked; nor had there been any particular change in the conditions there. Xenophon probably wrote at Scillus, in Western Greece. But the Gospels were not written in Palestine where Jesus' work had been done; on the contrary, they were written in the gentile field for Gentiles, in a different language and amid essentially different conditions of thought and life. This change of environment surely occasioned much selection, adaptation, and supplementation of the original memorabilia of Jesus in order that the Palestinian Gospel might function as a world-religion. One notes especially the tendency of the Gospels to draw forth from Jesus' teaching a formal code of ethics, to build up around him a formal following and an ecclesiastical organization, and to invest his message and person with a mystical soteriological doctrine.

Scholars are not yet agreed as to whether Plato or Xenophon gives the more historical account of Socrates. The popular view for some time¹ has favored the account by Xenophon, regarding it as more objective, detailed, accurate, and practically useful. Critical opinion, however, tends to pronounce this preference a pragmatic one, arising more from a prevailing taste and judgment of usability than from a straight historical investigation of the sources.

Both Plato and Xenophon knew Socrates personally, for as young men between twenty and thirty years of age they were for several years under the direct instruction of Socrates toward the close of his life. Plato's was the longer association with Socrates, extending over eight or ten years; but Xenophon also had an abundance of time for acquainting himself with Socrates' personality and message. Plato was a writer of philosophy, Xenophon was a writer of history; from which facts one might expect Xenophon

¹ Burnet, *op. cit.*, p. 127, states that the first writer to prefer the Socrates of the *Memorabilia* to the Platonic Socrates was apparently Brucker (1741), and that this opinion seems to reflect the current eighteenth century conception of what a philosopher should be, namely, a homilizing moralist rather than a critical thinker and dialectician.

would be the more objective and informing biographer of Socrates' life. But Plato had a greater mind than Xenophon's, and must then have been the better able to discern, appreciate, and communicate the essential Socrates. The Socratic writings distinctly show how two persons of different mental capacities, interests, and habits will differently apprehend the same person, and will report him according to the color and perspective of their own personal characteristics.

A great man is fortunate to have even one competent biographer. The greatness of many men has been doomed to obscurity by the lack of this. Certainly it was one of the remarkable events of history that Socrates should have had, not only one, but two great first-hand biographers.

Xenophon was one of the foremost ancient Greek historians.¹ His writings that have come down to us make four solid English volumes. The major works are the *Hellenica*, the *Anabasis*, and the *Cyropaedia*. Among the minor works are the four treatises which present Socrates—the *Memorabilia*, the *Apology*, the *Economist*, and the *Symposium*. The longest of these is the *Memorabilia*,² and for biographical material concerning Socrates this is also the most important of Xenophon's writings. The *Memorabilia* was produced twenty to thirty years after Socrates' death, therefore *ca.* 380–370 B.C. Its purpose was to defend Socrates against the defamation and misrepresentations of his enemies, and to revivify the spirit and teaching of Socrates for a generation too young to know him personally. As already noted, Xenophon had been for several years during his young manhood a direct disciple of Socrates, so that he was in possession of first-hand knowledge of his life and teaching. At several points in the *Memorabilia* he claims this immediate acquaintance with the facts, and the writing throughout purports to be a simple historical account of the personality, the method, and the message of Socrates. But Xenophon does not

¹ For a reduced valuation of his ability as a historical writer, see Bury, *The Ancient Greek Historians* (1909), pp. 151–54.

² The four Socratic treatises together constitute Vol. III, Part 1, of the Dakyns edition, making 350 closely printed pages, of which the *Memorabilia* occupies a full half (182 pages).

at any point make a specific statement as to the sources he is using. We have therefore to estimate from the indirect evidence the accuracy of his picture of Socrates.

The other first-hand biographer of Socrates was Plato, the most renowned philosopher of the ancient world. For the eight or ten years preceding the death of Socrates, Plato had been much with him; it is certain that no one understood Socrates so well or learned so much from him. The young man eighteen to twenty-eight years of age, at the most impressionable period of his life and with a thirst for the widest knowledge, just absorbed the experience, philosophy, wisdom, method, and spirit of the elderly man who was the greatest character and teacher of the day. Xenophon was a superficial observer and narrator of Socrates, because mentally he was not so keen, profound, or original as Plato. Xenophon appreciated and described Socrates as a moral idealist and educator, with a kindly temper and a lofty message; but Plato became transformed into the mental likeness of Socrates—we may say he became a *new* Socrates, for the fourth century B.C., and in fact for all history, because his writings put Socrates into the possession of the ages.

Plato was not a weak personality leaning upon a stronger; he was a supremely great personality coming to full consciousness and power through the influence of his teacher. We cannot say that Socrates was greater than Plato, or Plato greater than Socrates. They were differently great, yet closely akin in their greatness. Plato established what Socrates founded and put Socrates on record. That was not a mere pedagogical and literary task: it required genius of the first order to recreate Socrates for a new generation. One's idea of a great man can be no larger than one's own mind; small men have small ideas even of great men. It requires a genius of commensurate stature to portray or interpret a genius. Plato went beyond Socrates in his metaphysical and ethical ideas, and he outranked Socrates in his literary gift. But he identifies himself with Socrates—their messages are inseparable, their minds and hearts are one. It is the judgment of the scholars that the earlier Dialogues contain more of Socrates and less of Plato; while the later Dialogues contain less of Socrates and more

of Plato. Still, the transition is gradual and obscure; it is never openly made or acknowledged. The *Dialogues* contain no explanation of Plato's relation to Socrates, or his use of him. Plato never appears in person, but makes Socrates always the spokesman of the message and the interlocutor of the conversations.

Plato wrote only philosophical works, and in Dialogue form.¹ His extant writings are massive; the standard English edition, by Jowett, is in five great volumes. The Dialogues of most importance for the biography of Socrates are the *Symposium*, the *Apology*, the *Crito*, the *Phaedo*; but much additional information and color may be gathered from other treatises also. The *Symposium* presents a scene from the height of Socrates' public career; the *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo* narrate the trial, imprisonment, and death.² Plato wrote these earlier Dialogues about thirty years after Socrates' death, ca. 370 B.C. This is the same time assigned above to the *Memorabilia* by Xenophon; the two writers were contemporaneous. Evidence is not available for determining the exact dates or the exact sequence of the *Dialogues*. Opinion is divided as to whether Xenophon's Socratic writings preceded or followed these Socratic writings of Plato; a question of possible dependence one way or the other is involved, but cannot yet be decided. In any case, the time interval between the two sets of writings was brief—they belonged to the same generation, and nearly if not quite to the same years. Plato's purpose was also like that of Xenophon, apologetic and didactic, to restore the reputation and message of Socrates after the disrepute of the public trial and execution had worn itself out at Athens. Plato too had a first-hand knowledge of Socrates—probably even a fuller and better knowledge than Xenophon's.

Plato did not, however, write a formal biography of Socrates; he did not produce a work which narrated the events of Socrates'

¹ That is, in the form of direct conversation. The dramatis personae of a treatise are often several rather than only two; but the conversation generally proceeds as a dialogue between Socrates and one other person, the further persons appearing in the dialogue at different points. Compare the similar features of the Gospels, where the conversation is also direct, and the dramatis personae are often several, but Jesus is in the foreground and speaks to one or to another or to the group, e.g., Matt. 3:13-15; 8:2-13, 18-32; 9:1-26; 11:2-6; 12:1-14, 46-50; 14:15-33; 15:21-28; 16:1-28, etc.

² Compare in the Gospels the extent, prominence, and spirit of the Passion narratives.

life from youth to age, in a general chronological order. Plato's pages, it is true, contain numerous events of Socrates' public career and many personal traits of the man; but these, instead of being formally recounted, receive only incidental mention in the conversations between himself and his friends. Plato never interrupts the dialogue with statements of fact or explanation. The *Dialogues* are therefore differently constructed from the "Lives" of famous persons written somewhat later by Plutarch and Diogenes Laertius.¹ Plato's type of mind was philosophizing rather than narrating, his interest was not to recount facts but to create anew the ideas of Socrates in his pupils and friends. Certainly the biographical type of literature that became common later was more popular, more readable, more effective pedagogically than the difficult *Dialogues* of Plato which only the studious will attempt. Yet even Plato's *Dialogues*, packed as they are with abstruse, intricate, tenuous, and often ponderous discussion, are enlivened with dramatic features, personal characteristics, humor, and color touches which relieve the tedium of their dialectic.

And dialogue was, in historical fact, the manner of Socrates' teaching. He doubtless conveyed his message by dialectical conversations such as the earlier *Dialogues* of Plato and the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon contain. It was the new type of instruction and literature which belonged to the rise of philosophy in Greece. Conversations like these, with pupils and friends, was the habitual pedagogical method of Socrates in his public work. He was not an orator, not a rhetorician, not an instructor in the formal sense—he was rather an inquirer after the truth, and his colloquies ran usually in the interrogatory style. Socrates maintained that he

¹ Plutarch did not write a Life of Socrates, apparently choosing men of action in preference. Diogenes supplements Plutarch's *Lives of the Statesmen* by a series of *Lives of the Philosophers*. Among these latter is one of Socrates; in the English translation of Diogenes by Yonge it occupies twelve pages. The facts of Socrates' life, gathered out of Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, Plato's *Dialogues*, other Socratic writings and tradition, are here presented in concise statement and orderly arrangement, with various wise sayings and anecdotes of his career, and without any material in dialogue form. This illustrates the striking difference between the dialogue and the biography as literary forms. Formal biographical writing was very new in the fourth century B.C., and the "Life" of Socrates was not so presented by either Xenophon or Plato.

did not know what the truth was with regard to many problems of ethics and philosophy; therefore he must be always asking it from others who claimed, or assumed, or supposed that they knew. Day after day and year after year he conversed with one and another person, in search of the truth concerning wisdom, courage, love, justice, virtue, statesmanship, and the like. In the *Memorabilia* and in the earlier Dialogues we see the real Socratic method. In the later writings of Plato the dialogic style tends to become mere form; the material takes the character of long discourses by Socrates, actual conversation tends to disappear, and the function of the interlocutors becomes unimportant. This is also the case with Xenophon's *Economist* as compared with the *Memorabilia*.

Certainly we do not understand that either Plato or Xenophon has put on record the *ipsissima verba* of Socrates, although as early as the third century A.D. that idea was in vogue.¹ But this view is much nearer the truth than the opposite hypothesis, according to which the accounts of Socrates' teaching are wholly fictitious, the product of subsequent pragmatic imagination and literary activity. Socrates undoubtedly impressed his speech as well as his thought upon Plato, Xenophon, and other close followers. Speech and thought go together; and in the case of a genius, as Socrates was, the pupils would acquire the forms of expression along with the ideas themselves. One is to note that Socrates was a master of pedagogic style, even though that style was of oral rather than of written speech. Of course Plato and Xenophon had their own literary style, which is abundantly preserved to us in their voluminous extant writings. Their *memorabilia* of Socrates must be considered to be in their habitual style, as to both vocabulary and idiom. It does not appear that either of them was using sources that contained the exact words of Socrates spoken a generation or two earlier. But neither were their *memorabilia* mere reminiscences, a product of sheer memory attempting to span that stretch of some thirty years.

¹ Diogenes Laertius, in the "Life" of Socrates, says: "He [Xenophon] was the first person who took down conversations as they occurred, and published them among men, calling them *Memorabilia*" (Yonge's tr., p. 75).

It seems likely that Socrates' many followers and admirers had from the time of his public activity maintained a continuous transmission of his teachings, method, and spirit. He was a reality and an influence in Athens even after the day of his death in 399 B.C. Thirty years later there were still many who as youths had seen and heard him, and who had remained interested in his message and his moral-social objective. Some persons may have had notes of his teachings taken directly from him during the years of their immediate discipleship,¹ though Socrates' teaching was not of the sort to be formally dictated by him or copied by his pupils. The probable view seems to be that there was a large, good, and lively Socratic tradition for a full generation after his death; the contents of it were partly descriptive of the man, partly anecdotal, and partly well-preserved accounts of some of his most instructive conversations. Plato and Xenophon were not only first-hand disciples of Socrates, with personal memories of him and his teachings; but they were presumably also industrious collectors and students of memorabilia in the possession of others. Out of all these treasures which Socrates' adherents preserved, the *Dialogues* of Plato and the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon were produced.

We know more about Socrates from Plato than from Xenophon for two excellent reasons: first, because from Plato we have five volumes of Socratic writings while from Xenophon we have but one volume; second, because Plato better understood the sweep of Socrates' thought, the significance of his message, the quality of his analysis, the power of his dialectic, the temperament of his mind. Socrates was more than the wise, simple, friendly, moral instructor that Xenophon describes; he was also the intellectual inquirer, provocative disturber of mental and civic rest and assumption, the keen analyst and acute dialectician, mystic, and metaphysician, upsetting with trenchant irony and exasperating nonchalance the conceits and the fallacies of Athens' best-known men. He called himself the gadfly sent to stir up the body politic. This is the Socrates of Plato's *Dialogues* more than of Xenophon's *Mem-*

¹ Compare the elaborate transcriptions of Epictetus' teachings made by his pupil Arrian, from which alone we are now in possession of Epictetus' message, as he himself was not a writer.

orabilia. The latter is highly valuable so far as it goes, but it lacks some of the specific and determining characteristics of the greatest Athenian of the fifth century B.C. Xenophon's Socrates, great as he is, seems a more commonplace and platitudinous teacher of everyday morals, the hero of the people more than of the philosophers, relatively quiet and inoffensive, who would scarcely have aroused the animosity that brought him to trial and public execution. In his production of an apology for Socrates, Xenophon has passed over his chief offenses; and in his production of a manual of conduct from Socrates' teaching, he has passed over the intellectualistic phases of his work. Xenophon's pages read like selected memoirs of the man and his message designed for a conciliatory and homiletic purpose; in his first book he calls his material *Memorabilia* (*Ἀπομνημονεύματα*), a correct title. The occasions of the Socratic sayings are generally indicated, but without date, place, or other historical setting. One cannot from them construct an outline of Socrates' career, so as to fit the sayings into a chronological framework or trace his mental development and the stages of his work. Something more can be done in this direction with the added information supplied by Plato, but neither does Plato intend or make possible a formal biography of Socrates, as Diogenes Laertius' serious but not highly successful attempt shows.

The most recent effort to reconstruct the "Life" of Socrates from all trustworthy information available in the ancient writings has been made by Burnet,¹ one of the foremost authorities in ancient Greek literature and thought. His method of using the sources is a simple one: he gathers from the *Dialogues* of Plato all the biographical data and puts them together into a connected account.² With respect to the acts and characteristics of Socrates, this information from Plato is regarded as reliable. With respect to the teaching which Plato presents Socrates as giving, that, too, is in general authentic, in both content and form, except of course

¹ John Burnet, *Greek Philosophy*, Part I, "Thales to Plato" (London, 1914), chap. viii.

² "It is possible to construct a biography of Socrates from the *Dialogues* of Plato and, on the face of it, they seem to present us with an intelligent and consistent account of the man and his ways" (p. 127).

that Plato is not reproducing the exact language of Socrates, and the historical setting given the Dialogues is often dramatic and literary rather than actual. The point is, that Plato does give us the real Socrates. And no other writer did so, for the Socrates of Xenophon, of Aristophanes, and of Aristotle fall short of a good historical representation of him.¹ Burnet thinks that Xenophon wrote the *Memorabilia* after Plato had written the earlier Dialogues, and in direct dependence upon them for much of his information about Socrates; also that Xenophon's apologetic and pedagogical purpose led him to present Socrates in an acceptable and usable interpretation that obscures and even in some cases misconstrues the actual facts.² Plato, therefore, is the one adequate and trustworthy biographer of Socrates; the accounts by others rank distinctly lower.

The valuation of Xenophon's *Memorabilia* must be discriminately made. If it is secondary to, and in greater or less dependence upon, the *Dialogues* of Plato, it is still true that it contains in the

¹ "It is quite impossible to get anything like a complete picture of Socrates from the *Memorabilia* alone, and so in practice every writer fills in the outline with as much of the Platonic Socrates as happens to suit his preconceived ideas of the man. In particular, the 'irony' of Socrates comes entirely from Plato. The Socrates of the *Memorabilia* has no doubts or difficulties of any kind. . . . The Platonic Socrates is actual enough, and he is the only Socrates we can hope to know well. . . . The only sound method, therefore, is to describe his life and opinions without, in the first instance, using any other source. Only when we have done that can we profitably go on to consider how far the Socrates we learn to know in this way will account for the slighter sketch of Xenophon" (pp. 127 f.).

² "It is not clear to me how far the *Memorabilia* can be regarded as independent testimony at all. In fact, it seems hardly possible to doubt that Xenophon got the greater part of his information about Socrates from the *Dialogues* of Plato. . . . The conclusion we are, in my opinion, forced to is that, while it is quite impossible to regard the Socrates of Aristophanes and the Socrates of Xenophon as the same person, there is no difficulty in regarding both as distorted images of the Socrates we know from Plato. The first is legitimately distorted for comic effect; the latter, not so legitimately for apologetic reasons. To avoid misunderstanding, I should say that I do not regard the *Dialogues* of Plato as records of actual conversations, though I think it probable that there are such imbedded in them. I also admit fully that the Platonic Socrates is Socrates as Plato saw him, and that his image may to some extent be transfigured by the memory of his martyrdom. The extent to which that has happened we cannot, of course, determine, but I do not believe it has seriously falsified the picture" (p. 149).

main the teaching of Socrates, in a form more simple, popular, and attractive than that of the Platonic writings. Xenophon's digest of the plain, concrete moral message of Socrates for the average man would very likely be more widely read among the people generally than the more elaborate, philosophical, and dialectical *Dialogues*.¹ Dakyns,² after a careful weighing of the whole evidence as to the historical character of the *Memorabilia*, decides that the work is not a historical account in the distinct, detailed sense, but a panegyric; at the same time, the author does not intentionally alter the historical facts in his pedagogical and literary task. He had either memoranda of Socrates' teaching or at least good memories of it from his own acquaintance and from others' acquaintance with Socrates. He produced this work independently of Plato's writings, and at a time earlier than their composition.³

A more favorable view of the *Memorabilia* is taken by Grote,⁴ who thinks that the Socrates of Xenophon and the Socrates of

¹ Bosanquet says: "It does not seem to me a dangerous assumption that on the whole the best ideas in the *Memorabilia* belong substantially to Socrates, just as it is easy to see that the details and arguments throughout belong in great measure to Xenophon" (*Internat. Jour. of Ethics*, 1905, p. 432).

² H. G. Dakyns, the translator of Xenophon's writings into English, under the title, *The Works of Xenophon* (London, 1890-97, 4 vols.).

³ "As to the design of the *Memorabilia*, I accept an ancient view [that of the greatest critic of the ancient world, Dionysius of Halicarnassus] that it is not primarily an historical account (still less is it a philosophical criticism); but in point of literary form . . . an apology which presently becomes a panegyric, setting forth the writer's conception of Socrates in opposition to current accounts, in which he feels that a certain side of the matter, of which he himself as a Socratic is entitled to speak, has been neglected. This other side of the matter he develops with no intentional untruthfulness of delineation, but what guides his hand as he draws the lines is the artistic or literary instinct of the man who is partly himself and partly a *vir Socraticus*. As to the composition, my notion is that Xenophon had either juvenile notes to depend on, or at any rate memories refreshed in conversation with friends (Socratic and other) which at a certain date were thrown into some sort of literary form, tentatively at first [possibly portions were orally delivered, a text was gradually formed, copies were circulated]. This was the nucleus of the complete work, which he kept working at on and off during his leisure at Scillus 387-371 B.C., till the final moment. As to the dates at which such a work was first begun or finally concluded, I think there is no evidence" (Dakyns, *The Works of Xenophon*, Vol. III, Part I, pp. xxii, xxiii).

⁴ Grote, *History of Greece*, chap. lxviii.

Plato are consistent. Xenophon presents Socrates as a homilist, but intimates that his method at other times was philosophical and dialectical; while Plato disregards the former aspect of Socrates' work, to present extensively the latter. Xenophon is interested in the practical teaching, Plato in the theoretical teaching, of Socrates. This view is in the direction of Burnet's view, but does not coincide with it, because Burnet does not think Socrates was the homilist that Xenophon makes him. Further, Burnet attributes a higher value to the biographical elements in Plato.

Jackson¹ also evaluates the *Memorabilia* more highly than Burnet does as a source for the historical knowledge of Socrates. He holds that we have in this and other Socratic writings of Xenophon records of Socrates' conversations; and that Xenophon was an excellent reporter of the teaching of Socrates because "he had no philosophical views of his own to develop, and no imagination to lead him astray." This, however, is not quite the case; we may see in Xenophon's other extensive writings that he was far from being a mere recorder of facts—he had a strong pedagogical impulse and his mind as well as his pen was active, as the *Cyropaedia* shows.² When Jackson says that "Plato, though he understood his master better, is a less trustworthy authority [than Xenophon], as he makes Socrates the mouthpiece of his own more advanced and even antagonistic doctrine," he seems to be thinking chiefly of the later Dialogues where the real Socrates tends to retire before the spokesman of Platonic ideas. No doubt Plato, in the period of his maturity, developed an extensive body of philosophical conceptions which find expression in his later Dialogues, and which were not specifically the teaching of Socrates or always consistent therewith; but to rank Xenophon above Plato as a biographer of Socrates seems out of line with the facts and will meet with much dissent among scholars at work upon this problem.

¹ Henry Jackson, art. "Socrates" in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed.

² Attention has been called above to the overrating of Xenophon's abilities as a historian, see Bury, *The Ancient Greek Historians*, pp. 151 f. With regard to the *Cyropaedia*, one writer says: "A distinct moral purpose, to which literal truth is sacrificed, runs through the work."

Gomperz¹ holds a view akin to that of Burnet as to the high value of the biographical data in Plato's writings: we know Socrates chiefly from this source. "An artist of the first order, a painter of word portraits with scarce an equal, has presented us with a marvellously clear and vivid likeness of his revered friend." He gives us the real Socrates, a character consistent with itself and with all other accounts. Socrates is of course idealized, but the delineation is true to the essential features of his life. As respects the teaching attributed in the *Dialogues* to Socrates, Gomperz goes somewhat beyond Burnet in assigning to Plato, an original thinker of the first rank, much of the actual thought, rewriting Socrates' message with "a full and unrestricted liberty." Starting from the Socratic teaching, and in the earlier writings largely reproducing it, Plato elaborated and modified the ideas of Socrates into a system of philosophy quite his own. Nevertheless, we are able to recover from the Platonic *Dialogues* the substance, and not a little of the aim, method, and spirit of Socrates' teaching. With regard to Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, Gomperz thinks Socrates is presented to us there with "much less artistic freedom, and yet not much more historical fidelity"; "that Xenophon's accounts of the discourses of Socrates do not always correspond with the truth may be proved to demonstration from the text of Xenophon himself."

A series of quotations, first from Plato's *Dialogues*, and second from Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, will give some indication of the biographical information in our possession concerning Socrates, and admit of some comparison between the two sources; also, certain parallelisms will appear between the life and teaching of Socrates and the life and teaching of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels.

QUOTATIONS FROM PLATO'S DIALOGUES²

Socrates. In spite of the opinion of the many, and in spite of consequences whether better or worse, shall we insist on the truth . . . that injustice is always an evil and dishonor to him who acts unjustly? Shall we say so or not?

¹ Theodor Gomperz, *Griechische Denker*, Bd. II (1902); Eng. tr. Vol. II (1905), pp. 59-65.

² The text used is that of Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato*, 3d ed., 1892.

Crito. Yes.

Soc. Then we must do no wrong?

Cr. Certainly not.

Soc. Nor when injured injure in return, as the many imagine; for we must injure no one at all?

Cr. Clearly not.

Soc. Again, Crito, may we do evil?

Cr. Surely not, Socrates.

Soc. And what of doing evil in return for evil, which is the morality of the many—is that just or not?

Cr. Not just.

Soc. For doing evil to another is the same as injuring him?

Cr. Very true.

Soc. Then we ought not to retaliate or render evil for evil to anyone, whatever evil we may have suffered from him. But I would have you consider, Crito, whether you really mean what you are saying. For this opinion has never been held, and never will be held, by any considerable number of persons.¹

Soc. Leave me then, Crito, to fulfill the will of God, and to follow whither he leads.²

Soc. Is it likely that the soul, which is invisible, . . . and pure, and noble, and on her way to the good and wise God, whither, if God will, my soul is also soon to go,³—that the soul, I repeat, if this be her nature and origin, will be blown away and destroyed immediately on quitting the body, as the many say? That can never be, my dear Simmias and Cebes. The truth rather is, that the soul . . . departs to the invisible world—to the divine and immortal and rational; thither arriving, she is secure of bliss and is released from the error and folly of men, their fears and wild passions and all other human ills, and forever dwells, as they say of the initiated, in company with the gods.⁴

Phaedo. Such was the end, Echebrates, of our friend [Socrates]; concerning whom I may truly say, that of all the men of his time whom I have known, he was the wisest and justest and best.⁵

Soc. Now the proper office of punishment is twofold: he who is rightly punished ought either to become better and profit by it, or he ought to be made an example to his fellows, that they may see what he suffers, and fear and become better. Those who are improved when they are punished by gods and

¹ *Crito* 49.

² *Ibid.* 54e.

³ This passage is from the last conversation of Socrates with his close friends, just before his execution.

⁴ *Phaedo* 80e, 81a.

⁵ *Ibid.* 118e.

men, are those whose sins are curable; and they are improved, as in this world so also in another, by pain and suffering; for there is no other way in which they can be delivered from evil. But they who have been guilty of the worst crimes, and are incurable by reason of their crimes, are made examples; for, as they are incurable, the time is passed at which they can receive any benefit. They get no good themselves, but others get good when they behold them enduring forever the most terrible and painful and fearful sufferings as the penalty of their sins.¹

Soc. Upon this we got up and walked about in the court, and I thought that I would make trial of the strength of his resolution [to study rhetoric with the famous sophist Protagoras]. So I examined him and put questions to him. Tell me, Hippocrates, I said, as you are going to Protagoras, and will be paying your money to him, what is he to whom you are going? and what will he make of you? . . . Is not a Sophist, Hippocrates, one who deals wholesale or retail in the food of the soul? To me that appears to be his nature.

And what, Socrates, is the food of the soul?

Surely, I said, knowledge is the food of the soul; and we must take care, my friend, that the Sophist does not deceive us when he praises what he sells, like the dealers wholesale or retail who sell the food of the body. . . . Those who carry about the wares of knowledge, and make the round of the cities, and sell or retail them to any customer who is in want of them, praise them all alike; though I should not wonder, O my friend, if many of them were really ignorant of their effect upon the soul; and their customers equally ignorant, unless he who buys of them happens to be a physician of the soul. If, therefore, you have understanding of what is good and evil, you may safely buy knowledge of Protagoras.²

Alcibiades. I shall praise Socrates in a figure which will appear to him to be a caricature, and yet I speak, not to make fun of him, but only for the truth's sake. I say, that he is exactly like the busts of Silenus, which are set up in the statuaries' shop, holding pipes and flutes in their mouths; . . . you yourself will not deny, Socrates, that your face is like that of a satyr. . . . And are you not a flute-player? That you are, and a performer far more wonderful than Marsyas. He indeed with instruments used to charm the souls of men by the power of his breath, and the players of his music do so still. . . . But you produce the same effect with your words only, and do not require the flute; . . . the mere fragments of you and your words, even at secondhand, and however imperfectly repeated, amaze and possess the souls of every man, woman, and child who comes within the hearing of them. And if I were not afraid that you would think me hopelessly drunk, I would have sworn as well as spoken to the influence which they have always had and still have over me. . . . I observe that many others are affected in the same

¹ *Gorgias* 525b.

² *Protagoras* 311b, 313c.

manner. I have heard Pericles and other great orators, and I thought that they spoke well, but I never had any similar feeling; my soul was not stirred by them, nor was I angry at the thought of my own slavish state. But this Marsyas has often brought me to such a pass, that I have felt as if I could hardly endure the life which I am leading (this, Socrates, you will admit); and I am conscious that if I did not shut my ears against him, and fly as from the voice of the siren, my fate would be like that of others,—he would transfix me, and I should grow old sitting at his feet. For he makes me confess that I ought not to live as I do, neglecting the wants of my own soul, and busying myself with the concerns of the Athenians; therefore I hold my ears and tear myself away from him. And he is the only person who ever made me ashamed.

. . . . For I know that I cannot answer him or say that I ought not to do as he bids, but when I leave his presence the love of popularity gets the better of me. . . . [His words] are the only words which have a meaning in them, and also the most divine, abounding in fair images of virtue, and of the widest comprehension, or rather extending to the whole duty of a good and honorable man.¹

Alcib. He and I went on the expedition to Potidaea; there we messed together, and I had the opportunity of observing his extraordinary power of sustaining fatigue. His endurance was simply marvellous when, being cut off from our supplies, we were compelled to go without food—on such occasions, which often happen in time of war, he was superior not only to me but to everybody. . . . Socrates, with his bare feet on the ice and in his ordinary dress, marched better than the other soldiers who had shoes, and they looked daggers at him because he seemed to despise them. . . .

One morning he was thinking about something which he could not resolve; he would not give it up, but continued thinking from early dawn until noon—there he stood fixed in thought; and at noon attention was drawn to him, and the rumor ran through the wondering crowd that Socrates had been standing and thinking about something ever since the break of day. At last, in the evening after supper, some Ionians out of curiosity (I should explain that this occurred not in winter but in summer), brought out their mats and slept in the open air that they might watch him and see whether he would stand all night. There he stood until the following morning.²

Soc. Until philosophers are kings, or the kings and princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one, and those commoner natures who pursue either to the exclusion of the other are compelled to stand aside, cities will never have rest from their evils,—no, nor the human race, as I believe,—and then only will this our State have a possibility of life and behold the light of day.³

¹ *Symposium* 215, 216, 222a.

² *Ibid.* 219e, 220.

³ *Republic* v. 473d.

Soc. Then this must be our notion of the just man, that even when he is in poverty and sickness, or any other seeming misfortune, all things will in the end work together for good to him in life and death: for the gods have a care of any one whose desire is to become just and to be like God, as far as man can attain the divine likeness, by the pursuit of virtue.¹

Soc. My counsel is, that we hold fast ever to the heavenly way and follow after justice and virtue always, considering that the soul is immortal and able to endure every sort of good and every sort of evil. Thus shall we live dear to one another and to the gods, both while remaining here and when . . . we receive our reward. And it shall be well with us both in this life and in the pilgrimage of a thousand years.²

How you, O Athenians, have been affected by my accusers, I cannot tell; but I know that they almost made me forget who I was—so persuasively did they speak; and yet they have hardly uttered a word of truth. But of the many false words told by them, there was one which quite amazed me;—I mean when they said that you should be upon your guard and not allow yourselves to be deceived by the force of my eloquence. To say this, when they were certain to be detected as soon as I opened my lips and proved myself to be anything but a great speaker, did indeed appear to me to be most shameless—unless by the force of eloquence they meant the force of truth. . . . From me you shall hear the whole truth: not, however, delivered after their manner in a set oration duly ornamented with words and phrases. . . . If I defend myself in my accustomed manner, and you hear me using the words which I have been in the habit of using in the agora, at the tables of the money-changers, or anywhere else, I would ask you not to be surprised, and not to interrupt me on this account. For I am more than seventy years of age; and, appearing now for the first time in a court of law, I am quite a stranger to the language of the place. . . . Never mind the manner, which may or may not be good; but think only of the truth of my words, and give heed to that: let the speaker speak truly and the judge decide justly.³

I am called wise, for my hearers always imagine that I myself possess the wisdom which I find wanting in others: but the truth is, O men of Athens, that God only is wise; and by his answer he intends to show that the wisdom of men is worth little or nothing. . . . And so I go about the world, obedient to the God, and search and make inquiry into the wisdom of anyone, whether citizen or stranger, who appears to be wise; and if he is not wise, then in vindication of the oracle I show him that he is not wise, and my occupation quite absorbs me, and I have no time to give either to any public matter of interest or to any concern of my own, but I am in utter poverty by reason of my devotion to the God.⁴

¹ *Republic* x. 613a.

³ *Apology* 17, 18a.

² *Ibid.* x. 621e.

⁴ *Ibid.* 23a.

I proceed to interrogate and examine and cross-examine him, and if I think that he has no virtue in him, but only says that he has, I reproach him with undervaluing the greater, and overvaluing the less. And I shall repeat the same words to every one whom I meet, young and old, citizen and alien, but especially to the citizens, inasmuch as they are my brethren. For know that this is the command of God; and I believe that no greater good has ever happened in the state than my service to the God. For I do nothing but go about persuading you all, old and young alike, not to take thought for your persons or your properties, but first and chiefly to care about the greatest improvement of the soul.¹

If I tell you that to do as you say would be a disobedience to the God, and therefore that I cannot hold my tongue, you will not believe that I am serious; and if I say again that daily to discourse about virtue, and of those other things about which you hear me examining myself and others, is the greatest good of man, and that the unexamined life is not worth living, you are still less likely to believe me. Yet I say what is true.²

If indeed when the pilgrim arrives in the world below, he is delivered from the professors of justice in this world, and finds the true judges who are said to give judgment there, . . . that pilgrimage will be worth making. . . . Above all, I shall then be able to continue my search into true and false knowledge; as in this world, so also in the next; and I shall find out who is wise, and who pretends to be wise, and is not. . . . In another world they do not put a man to death for asking questions: assuredly not. For besides being happier than we are, they will be immortal, if what is said is true.

Wherefore, O judges, be of good cheer about death, and know of a certainty, that no evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death. He and his are not neglected by the gods; nor has my own approaching end happened by mere chance. But I see clearly that the time has arrived when it was better for me to die and be released from trouble. . . . The hour of departure has arrived, and we go our ways—I to die, and you to live. Which is better God only knows.³

QUOTATIONS FROM XENOPHON'S MEMORABILIA.⁴

Socrates ever lived in the public eye; at early morning he was to be seen betaking himself to one of the promenades, or wrestling-grounds; at noon he would appear with the gathering crowds in the marketplace; and as day declined, wherever the largest throng might be encountered, there was he to be found, talking for the most part, while any one who chose might stop and listen.⁵

¹ *Apology* 29e, 30a.

² *Ibid.* 37e, 38a.

³ *Ibid.* 41c, 42a.

⁴ The text used is that of Dakyns, *The Works of Xenophon*, Vol. III, Part I (1897).

⁵ *Mem.* I. i. 10.

He himself never wearied of discussing human topics. What is piety? What is impiety? What is the beautiful? What the ugly? What the noble? What the base? What are meant by just and unjust? What by sobriety and madness? What by courage and cowardice? What is a state? What is a statesman? What is a ruler over men? What is a ruling character? and other like problems, the knowledge of which, as he put it, conferred a patent of nobility on the possessor, whereas those who lacked the knowledge might deservedly be stigmatized as slaves.¹

At one time Socrates was a member of the Council, he had taken the senatorial oath, and sworn "as a member of that house to act in conformity with the laws." It was thus he chanced to be President of the Popular Assembly, when that body was seized with a desire to put the nine generals . . . to death by a single inclusive vote. Whereupon, in spite of the bitter resentment of the people, and the menaces of several influential citizens, he refused to put the question, esteeming it of greater importance faithfully to abide by the oath which he had taken, than to gratify the people wrongfully, or to screen himself from the menaces of the mighty.²

With regard to the care bestowed by the gods upon men, his belief differed widely from that of the multitude.³ Whereas most people seem to imagine that the gods know in part, and are ignorant in part, Socrates believed firmly that the gods know all things—both the things that are said and the things that are done, and the things that are counseled in the silent chambers of the heart. Moreover, they are present everywhere, and bestow signs upon man concerning all the things of man.⁴

No less surprising to my mind is the belief that Socrates corrupted the young. This man, who . . . kept his appetites and passions under strict control, who was pre-eminently capable of enduring winter's cold and summer's heat, and every kind of toil, who was so schooled to curtail his needs that with the scantiest of means he never lacked sufficiency, . . . was he not rather the saving of many through the passion for virtue which he roused in them, and the hope he infused that through careful management of themselves they might grow to be truly beautiful and good,—not indeed that he ever undertook to be a teacher of virtue, but being evidently virtuous himself he made those who associated with him hope that by imitating they might at last resemble him.⁵

It is with the workings of the soul as with those of the body; want of exercise of the organ leads to inability of function, here bodily, there spiritual,

¹ *Mem.* I. i. 16.

² *Ibid.* I. i. 18.

³ His belief was so much higher than theirs.

⁴ *Ibid.* I. i. 19.

⁵ *Ibid.* I. ii. 3.

so that we can neither do the things that we should nor abstain from the things we should not.¹

Socrates . . . was plainly a lover of the people, and indeed of all mankind. Though he had many ardent admirers among citizens and strangers alike, he never demanded any fee for his society from any one, but bestowed abundantly upon all alike of the riches of his soul. . . . Socrates gave a lifetime to the outpouring of his substance in the shape of the greatest benefits bestowed on all who cared to receive them. In other words, he made those who lived in his society better men, and sent them on their way rejoicing. To no other conclusion, therefore, can I come but that, being so good a man, Socrates was worthier to have received honor from the state than death.²

It may serve to illustrate the assertion that he benefited his associates partly by the display of his own virtue and partly by verbal discourse and argument, if I set down my various recollections³ on these heads. And first with regard to religion and the concerns of heaven. In conduct and language his behavior conformed to the rule: . . . "Act according to the law and custom of your state, and you will act piously." . . . His formula of prayer was simple: "Give me that which is best for me," for, said he, the gods know best what good things are. . . . If with scant means he offered but small sacrifices, he believed that he was in no wise inferior to others who made frequent and large sacrifices from an ampler store. . . . His belief was that the joy of the gods is greater in proportion to the holiness of the giver.⁴

A belief is current, in accordance with views maintained concerning Socrates in speech and writing, and in either case conjecturally, that, however powerful he may have been in stimulating men to virtue as a theorist, he was incapable of acting as their guide himself. It would be well for those who adopt this view to weigh carefully not only what Socrates effected "by way of castigation" in cross-questioning those who conceived themselves to be possessed of all knowledge, but also his everyday conversation with those who spent their time in close intercourse with himself. Having done this, let them decide whether he was incapable of making his companions better.⁵

Antiphon [the Sophist] approaches Socrates in hope of drawing away his associates, and in their presence thus accosts him: Why, Socrates, I always thought it was expected of students of philosophy to grow in happiness daily; but you seem to have reaped other fruits from your philosophy. At any rate, you exist, I do not say live, in a style such as no slave serving under a master would put up with. Your meat and your drink are of the cheapest sort, and

¹ *Mem.* I. ii. 19.

² *Ibid.* I. ii. 59-62.

³ Ἀπομνημονεύματα, *Memorabilia*.

⁴ *Ibid.* I. iii. 1-3.

⁵ *Ibid.* I. iv. 1.

as to clothes, you cling to one wretched cloak which serves you for summer and winter alike; and so you go the whole year round, without shoes to your feet or a shirt to your back. Then again, you are not for taking or making money, the mere seeking of which is a pleasure, even as the possession of it adds to the sweetness and independence of existence. I do not know whether you follow the common rule of teachers, who try to fashion their pupils in imitation of themselves, and propose to mould the characters of your companions; but if you do, you ought to dub yourself professor of the art of wretchedness.

Thus challenged, Socrates replied: One thing to me is certain, Antiphon; you have conceived so vivid an idea of my life of misery that for yourself you would choose death sooner than live as I do. Suppose now we turn and consider what it is you find so hard in my life. Is it that he who takes payment must as a matter of contract finish the work for which he is paid; whereas I, who do not take it, lie under no constraint to discourse except with whom I choose? Do you despise my dietary on the ground that the food which I eat is less wholesome and less strengthening than yours? . . . And as to raiment—clothes, you know, are changed on account of cold or else of heat. . . . I, who am forever training myself to endure this, that, and the other thing which may befall the body, can brave all hardships more easily than yourself for instance, who perhaps are not so practiced. And to escape slavery to the belly or to sleep or to lechery, can you suggest more effective means than the possession of some more powerful attraction, some counter-charm which shall gladden not only in the using, but by the hope enkindled of its lasting usefulness? And yet this you do know: joy is not to him who feels that he is doing well in nothing—it belongs to one who is persuaded that things are progressing with him, be it tillage or the working of a vessel, or any of the thousand and one things on which a man may chance to be employed. To him it is given to rejoice as he reflects, "I am doing well." But is the pleasure derived from all these things put together half as joyous as the consciousness of becoming better oneself, of acquiring better and better friends? That, for my part, is the belief I continue to cherish.¹

When any one has been kindly treated, and has it in his power to requite [reciprocate] the kindness but neglects to do so, men call him ungrateful. . . . No matter who confers the kindness, friend or foe, the recipient should endeavor to requite it, failing which he is a wrongdoer. . . . In proportion to the greatness of the benefit conferred, the greater his misdoing who fails to requite the kindness.²

[Socrates is arguing with a younger brother to get him to love, win, and co-operate with his older brother. He urges the naturalness of brothers to love and help each other, the value of a brother, the way to win him by kind words and deeds, his duty to take the first step toward conciliation, to show

¹ *Mem.* I. vi. 1-9.

² *Ibid.* II. ii. 1, 2.

himself "a good, honest, brotherly man." At present you two [brothers] are in the condition of two hands formed by God to help each other, but which have let go their business, and have turned to hindering one another all they can. You are a pair of feet fashioned on the Divine plan to work together, but which have neglected this to trammel each other's gait. . . . In fashioning two brothers, God intends them (I think) to be of more benefit to one another than either two hands or two feet. . . . A pair of brothers, linked in amity, can work for each other's good, though seas divide them.¹

Seeds of love are implanted in man by nature. Men have need of one another, feel pity, help each other by united efforts, and in recognition of the fact show mutual gratitude. . . . Through all opposing barriers friendship steals her way and binds together the noble and good among mankind. Such is their virtue that they would rather possess scant means without injuring others than wield an empire won by war. In spite of hunger and thirst, they will share their meat and drink gladly. . . . It is theirs not merely to eschew all greed of riches; not merely to make a just and lawful distribution of wealth, but to supply what is lacking to the needs of one another. . . . As to envy, they will make a clean sweep and clearance of it: the good things which a man possesses shall be also the property of his friends, and the goods which they possess are to be looked upon as his.²

In whatsoever you desire to be esteemed good, endeavor to be good. For of all the virtues nameable among men, consider and you will find there is not one but may be increased by learning and practice.³

It is difficult to do anything without some mistake or other; and no less difficult, even if you were to succeed in doing it perfectly, to escape all unfriendly criticism. . . . You should avoid censorious persons, and attach yourself to the considerate and kindhearted. In all your affairs accept with a good grace what you can do, and decline what you feel you cannot do. Whatever it be, do it heart and soul, and make it your finest work. There lies the method at once to silence faultfinders and to minister help to your own difficulties. Life will flow smoothly, risks will be diminished, provision against old age secured.⁴

When someone asked him [Socrates] what he regarded as the best pursuit or noblest study for a man, he answered: "*Successful conduct.*" . . . "I consider fortune and conduct to be diametrically opposed. For instance, to succeed in some desirable course of action without seeking to do so, I hold to be good fortune; but to do a thing well by dint of learning and practice, that according to my creed is successful conduct, and those who make this the serious business of their life seem to me to do well." They are at once the best

¹ *Mem.* II. iii. 18, 19.

³ *Ibid.* II. vi. 38.

² *Ibid.* II. vi. 21-23.

⁴ *Ibid.* II, viii. 5, 6.

and the dearest in the sight of God (he went on to say) who for instance in husbandry do well the things of farming, or in the art of healing all that belongs to healing, or in statecraft the affairs of state; whereas the man who does nothing well—nor well in anything—is (he added) neither good for anything nor dear to God.¹

In all human history there are no two characters of greater significance and interest than Socrates and Jesus. In the field of ethics they are pre-eminent; each contributed in a primary way to the development of moral earnestness, moral thoughtfulness, and moral idealism. One belonged to the fifth century B.C. and the other to the first century A.D., one was a Greek and the other a Jew, but both belonged to the highest period of the Mediterranean civilization. One founded a permanent philosophy, the other a permanent religion. Both died martyrs to their missions. Socrates lived a long life, Jesus a short one; but both performed the tasks they set themselves of instructing and uplifting humanity. Both had disciples who appreciated them, learned from them, and after their death carried forward their work. The personal traits, the characteristic acts, the pedagogical methods, and the spoken message of both were kept in memory by their adherents, told to persons who became interested, and put into written form for wider use and preservation.

A comparison of the Socratic writings of Plato and Xenophon with the Gospels shows fundamental similarities, some close parallels, and many divergences.

The purpose of the two groups of biographical writings, as we have seen above, was in general the same: to restore the reputation of a great and good man who had been publicly executed and defamed by the state; to re-establish his influence as a supreme teacher in respect to right living and thinking; and to render available to all the message of truth and duty which each had made it his life-work to promulgate. The Socratic writings accomplished this purpose in a wonderful way for the Greek world; and the Gospels, more than four hundred years later, with a Jewish-Christian message to the Greek world, accomplished their purpose equally well. Until the first century A.D. Socrates' life and teaching were the

¹ *Mem.* III. ix. 14, 15.

greatest ethical force in the Mediterranean civilization; after the first century A.D. Christianity became the dominant moral-religious order.

We have commented also upon the fact that the time interval between the public ministries of Socrates and Jesus, and the composition of the biographical writings that put them on record, was approximately the same—an interval of two generations, forty to seventy years. We cannot date exactly the *Dialogues* of Plato or the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon, any more than we can date exactly the four Gospels.

Two differences also have been noted between the Socratic writings and the Gospels: first, that the story of Socrates' life and teaching was written down in the same language in which it arose while the story of Jesus' life and teaching was written down in Greek but arose in the language of a Semitic people, the Aramaic; second, that the Socratic writings were composed in Greece for the very people among whom Socrates had done his work, while the Gospels were composed in foreign countries, for the gentile peoples, far from Palestine where Jesus' work had been done. These two differences of language and locality necessarily effected many minor differences in the character of the biographies; the translation of the Aramaic memorabilia of Jesus into Greek, and the adaptation of his Jewish life and teaching for use among Gentiles involved various transmutations of form and content. Further, the biographical data given by Plato and Xenophon are given in scattered, discursive form, while the biographical data in the Gospels are arranged in a general historical order, in a chronological framework.

In respect to quantity of material, the Socratic writings are several times longer than the Gospels. Perhaps it might therefore be expected that we should be enabled to know Socrates better than we know Jesus from a much briefer biographical literature. One is to observe, however, that the Gospels, though short compared with the *Dialogues* and the *Memorabilia*, are by no means scanty productions, especially in view of the fact that they are reporting a public ministry that occupied but one or two years; also, that the Gospels contain a simpler, more direct and less augmented account of Jesus, while Plato and Xenophon have greatly expanded

the message of Socrates to convey their own message as well. It does not appear that the Gospel writers had an individual philosophy and pedagogy, as was the case with the Socratic writers. When we differentiate in the *Dialogues* and the *Memorabilia* the materials which may be regarded as strictly biographical of Socrates, the quantity is not so much in excess of what the Gospels furnish as strictly biographical data of Jesus.

How accurate historically is the representation which the Socratic writings give of Socrates and the Gospels give of Jesus? We have seen that opinions differ remarkably. On the one side there are scholars who hold that the biographies in both cases are so fictitious and pragmatized that we cannot with any definiteness or certainty get back to their original heroes. On the other side there are scholars who take all reports concerning both Socrates and Jesus without historical criticism. Between these two extremes of opinion are various hypotheses as to the relative and the comparative trustworthiness of the accounts contained in the two groups of biographical writings.

The view here taken is one of the eclectic views, that it is possible for us to recover somewhat definitely and accurately the historical personages whose lives these biographers recount.

Socrates is to be known primarily from the earlier *Dialogues* of Plato, secondarily from the First Book of Xenophon's *Memorabilia*. The items contained in these writings are by no means to be accepted as historical facts without careful investigation and critical judgment, neither are the teachings attributed to Socrates to be regarded as a transcription of his exact words or even of his exact ideas—in some cases they may be, in other cases they quite surely are not, while in the great majority of passages we are to think of Socrates' language and thought as freely reproduced. To recur to the terms used above, Plato and Xenophon give us a portrait rather than a photograph of Socrates; they idealize him, they select the facts about him and the teachings which will serve their didactic and apologetic purpose. But when we once understand the nature of their compositions, we can with considerable success extricate the biographical data, and so come to know the real Socrates.

Jesus is to be known primarily from the Synoptic Gospels. Among these the Gospel of Mark is the earliest, and by their authors it has been incorporated almost wholly into the two others; the Gospel of Mark is therefore the first main source of our knowledge of Jesus. The second main source is the non-Markan material common to the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke—the material usually referred to as Q (or the Logia), a hypothetical document. The relative trustworthiness of these two sources for our information about Jesus cannot readily be determined, since by the terms of their differentiation they have no material in common. The Gospel of John has peculiar characteristics: it does not present a general account of Jesus' life and teaching, as is the case with the Synoptic Gospels, but a special doctrine of the person and work of Jesus as the Jewish Messiah (Christ) interpreted somewhat in the thought-forms of Hellenistic metaphysical theology, with reference to the Stoic and Alexandrian Logos speculation. With regard to the Gospels, as with regard to the Socratic writings, one may say that the items apparently biographical are by no means to be accepted as historical facts without careful investigation and critical judgment, neither are the teachings attributed to Jesus to be regarded as a transcription of his exact words or even of his exact ideas except where the evidence is strongly in that direction. Our efforts are not very successful to get back through the Greek translation to the Aramaic form of the Gospel memorabilia; the story and message of Jesus have certainly undergone selection, adaptation, and supplementation to meet the needs of the gentile-Christian mission; and there can be no doubt that the primitive Christian tradition, and the Gospels which came out of it, idealize Jesus with a didactic and apologetic purpose. Of Jesus, too, the picture is a portrait rather than a photograph. Yet it is not too much to affirm that the Gospels give us the main facts and the main teachings about Jesus. When we can detach ourselves sufficiently from current theology and homiletics to study and view Jesus quite historically, the real Jesus will come to view.

Do the biographical documents of Socrates and Jesus show parallelism? Some who rank Xenophon above Plato as a biographer of Socrates, regarding the *Memorabilia* as a highly accurate

account, say that the *Memorabilia* corresponds to Mark's Gospel, each furnishing the earliest and most trustworthy report of their respective subjects. But on Burnet's view, to which this paper inclines, Xenophon's writing is later than and secondary to Plato's *Dialogues*; hence this alleged parallelism does not exist. The earlier Dialogues of Plato, in their biographical material, correspond in a general way to the Gospel of Mark and the common non-Markan material (Q) in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. As these two Gospels, the first and the third, in their present form were later than the Gospel of Mark and the other common source or sources, a limited measure of parallelism may be said to obtain between the First Book of Xenophon's *Memorabilia* and the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, while the other books of the *Memorabilia*, and the later Dialogues of Plato, where Socrates is little more than a spokesman for the individual messages of the two writers, sustain a tenuous parallelism with the Gospel of John. But these correspondences cannot be pressed; if they exist, it is only in a general, slight, and superficial way.

The fact which most impresses one is, that revering, competent purposeful disciples of the two greatest teachers of the ancient world held tenaciously to the precious personality, example, and message of their heroes, perpetuated their memory and influence, developed and adapted their teaching for the subsequent generations, established what they had founded, conserved the moral values that Socrates and Jesus had created, and put into permanent motion their moral impulses and ideals. The achievement of the disciples in so continuing and developing the work of their masters was next in worth to that of Socrates and Jesus themselves; and to put them on record for all men in lofty biographical writings was to complete efficiently and gloriously the disciples' task.